

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----151244Z 089577 /10

R 151106Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3675
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
USMISSION USUN NY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1707

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR LE SY PLO
SUBJ: BOUTROS ON THE SOUTH; THE CAIRO ACCORDS

REF: STATE 083719

1. SUMMARY. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS SHARES OUR VIEW THAT THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH IS COOLING DOWN. GOL IS NOW TURNING TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS AS NEXT STEP IN TRYING RESOLVE PRESENT UNSETTLED STATE OF AFFAIRS IN LEBANON. IT MAY ASK OUR HELP IN THIS EFFORT. AMBASSADOR INDICATED HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT USG POSITION WOULD BE. END SUMMARY.

2. POLOFF MOLINEAUX AND I SAW FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS AT NOON APR 14 AND BRIEFED HIM IN LINE WITH INSTRUCTIONS IN REFTEL. WE REVIEWED RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOUTH. BOUTROS WAS ALREADY AWARE OF NATURE OF OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND BASHIR GEMAYEL ON APR 9, AND ALSO

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KNEW THAT AMBASSADOR MURPHY IN DAMASCUS HAD SEEN PRESIDENT ASSAD. HE SAID THAT CHAMOUN HAS TAKEN A MORE MODERATE LINE IN RECENT DAYS.

3. BOUTROS SAID HE PERCEIVED THE PRESENT SITUATION, AFTER THE CALMING DOWN OF THE SOUTH, AS POSING TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS: 1) HOW TO "RUPTURE" PEACEFULLY THE

ISRAELI CONNECTION WITH LEBANESE CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS, WHICH WAS A DESTABILIZING FACTOR, AND 2) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS. IN LATTER RESPECT, GOL MIGHT ASK (BUT WAS NOT YET DOING SO) WHAT WE COULD DO TO HELP. HE NOTED THAT KUWAITIS, SAUDIS AND EGYPTIANS HAD "RESERVATIONS" ABOUT THEIR FULL APPLICATION, AS CALLED FOR AT THE CAIRO/RIYADH SUMMITS OF OCTOBER 1976. LEBANON WANTED TO AVOID PROVOKING ANY DIPLOMATIC CRISIS BETWEEN SYRIA AND THE OTHER THREE. BOUTROS SAID HE PLANNED TO DISCUSS PROBLEM EXTENSIVELY WITH THE QUADRIPARTITE AMBASSADORS, BEGINNING WITH THE KUWAITI WHEN HE RETURNS FROM HIS PRESENT CONSULTATIONS IN KUWAIT. BOUTROS WONDERED IF THE U.S. COULD BE OF ASSISTANCE IN THIS EFFORT.

4. I TOLD BOUTROS MY UNDERSTANDING WAS THAT APPLICATION OF ACCORDS HAD BEEN SIDE-TRACKED BECAUSE ARAFAT HAD CONVINCED SYRIANS IN FEBRUARY THAT PALESTINIANS OF ALL PERSUASIONS, FATAH AS WELL AS REJECTIONISTS, WOULD FIGHT TO THE END IF SYRIANS INVADED CAMPS. THE QUANTITY OF ARMS IN CAMPS HAD BEEN REDUCED SINCE THEN, BUT A SYRIAN FRONTAL ASSAULT IN THE CAMPS AT THIS TIME WOULD STILL HAVE DRASTIC CONSEQUENCES FOR BOTH THE PALESTINIANS (WHO WOULD REACT ELSEWHERE IN LEBANON) AND THE SYRIANS (VIS-A-VIS THEIR ARAB NEIGHBORS).

5. BOUTROS SAID DEBATE ABOUT HOW MANY ARMED PALESTINIAN GUARDS SHOULD BE ALLOWED IN THE CAMPS WAS
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A PRETEXT, THE REAL ISSUE BEING FULL APPLICATION OF ACCORDS THEMSELVES. DELAY IN APPLICATION WAS JEOPARDIZING LEBANON'S INTERNAL SITUATION AND EMBARRASSING THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT: THE CHRISTIANS WOULD NOT ACCEPT COMPLETE DISARMAMENT UNLESS AND UNTIL PALESTINIANS WERE DISARMED AND VICE VERSA.

6. BOUTROS ASKED MY PERSONAL VIEW IF IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR USG TO APPROACH THE KUWAITIS AND SAUDIS ON ISSUE. HE WAS CAREFUL TO MAKE CLEAR THAT HE WAS NOT NOW MAKING SUCH A REQUEST. TOLD HIM I DID NOT KNOW IF THE USG WAS PREPARED TO GO ON RECORD IN SUPPORT OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS AND WOULD HAVE TO ASK FOR INSTRUCTIONS FROM WASHINGTON. BOUTROS SAID THAT IF THE CAIRO ACCORDS WERE IMPLEMENTED BY SYRIANS WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THE KUWAITIS, SAUDIS AND EGYPTIANS, TENSIONS WOULD BE PROVOKED IN THE ARAB WORLD AND LEBANON COULD EVEN BECOME DIPLOMATICALLY ISOLATED. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE ACCORDS ARE NOT IMPLEMENTED, AUTHORITY OF

PRESIDENT SARKIS, AS WELL AS SYRIAN PRESITGE AND CREDIBILITY (PARTICULARLY VIS-A-VIS THE CHRISTIANS) WOULD SUFFER. IN THIS LATTER CASE, THE CHRISTIANS WERE LIKELY TO ATTEMPT MILITARY PRESSURE, AND NEW TENSIONS AND A WHOLLY NEW CRISIS COULD RESULT. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE UNITED STATES MIGHT NOT WANT TO ENDORSE DIRECTLY THE CAIRO ACCORDS, BUT HE THOUGHT THE U.S. COULD BE OF ASSISTANCE INDIRECTLY BY STRESSING TO THE OTHER ARAB POWERS THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORT FOR THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT IN LEBANON, AND SUPPORT FOR THE ARAB SECURITY FORCES AND THEIR OBJECTIVES. WHEN I NOTED THAT WE WERE ALREADY FOLLOWING THIS LINE, HE AGREED BUT THOUGHT WE COULD PERHAPS CHANGE EMPHASIS IN WAY TO GIVE SUPPORT TO CAIRO ACCORDS.

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ACTION SS-25

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-----151314Z 089868 /46

R 151106Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3676
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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EXDIS

7. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, WHAT WOULD IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS SPECIFICALLY ACCOMPLISH, BOUTROS SAID IT WOULD STRENGTHEN THE LEBANESE STATE VIS-A-VIS BOTH THE CHRISTIANS AND PALESTINIANS. IF NOT IMPLEMENTED, THE CHRISTIANS WILL DENOUNCE THE CAIRO/RIYADH SUMMITS' DECISIONS AS NULL AND VOID.

8. MORE BASICALLY, I ASKED BOUTROS WHAT KIND OF A LONGER-TERM PALESTINIAN STATUS IN LEBANON DID GOL

ENVISAGE RESULTING FROM IMPLEMENTATION? BOUTROS SAID ONLY THAT THE ESSENTIAL ISSUE WAS THE COLLECTION OF HEAVY WEAPONS, PLUS THE LIMITATIONS OF THE NUMBER OF ARMED GUARDS IN THE CAMPS.

9. I TOLD BOUTROS I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT PROBLEM WAS BEING APPROACHED IN A VOID. HAD HE OR OTHERS IN THE GOL DISCUSSED THE PROBLEM DIRECTLY WITH ARAFAT OR OTHER PLO REPRESENTATIVES? BOUTROS SAID HE HAD
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NOT TALKED TO ARAFAT, BUT WAS WILLING TO DO SO IF PRESIDENT SARKIS SO INSTRUCTED HIM. LATTER WAS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ACCORDS, NOT BOUTROS. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION ABOUT MY VIEWS OF PALESTINIAN ATTITUDES, I SAID WE HAD IMPRESSION THAT PALESTINIANS GENERALLY REGARDED LEBANON AS THEIR LAST REFUGE, AND THEY FEARED CHRISTIAN RETALIATION.

10. I ASKED IF CAIRO ACCORDS THEMSELVES WERE ADEQUATE SOLUTION TO PROBLEM. BOUTROS TOOK POSITION THAT LEBANON HAS TO LIVE WITH WHAT IS A LEGALLY BINDING AGREEMENT. I NOTED THAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVED THE CAIRO ACCORDS THEMSELVES HAVE BEEN INVALIDATED BY SUBSEQUENT EVENTS, AND WANTED TO ELIMINATE ANY SPECIAL STATUS FOR THE PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON.

11. WE BOTH AGREED TO REFLECT FURTHER ON THE QUESTION. BOUTROS SAID HE HAD AN OPEN MIND ON THE SUBJECT, BUT HOPED TO REACH SOME POSITIONS AFTER HE SPEAKS TO THE THREE ARAB AMBASSADORS. HE COMPLAINED IN PASSING THAT THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR ALWAYS SAYS HE AGREES WITH STRICT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACCORDS, BUT DOES NOT ACT WHEN SPECIFIC STEPS ARE REQUIRED. IN CLOSING, I SAID, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, THAT ALTHOUGH WE MIGHT HAVE SOME INFLUENCE WITH SAUDIS, WE WOULD NOT WANT TO APPROACH THEM ON CAIRO ACCORDS UNTIL AFTER A THOROUGH STUDY OF THE QUESTION BY BOTH GOL AND USG. BOUTROS AGREED AND ASKED THAT I PLEASE TREAT HIS REMARKS AS PERSONAL AND EXPLORATORY, AND THAT WE TAKE NO INITIATIVE ON MATTER.

12. COMMENT: OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS AND THE NUMEROUS SUPPLEMENTS THERETO, IS INCOMPLETE, BUT CLEARLY THE MOST BASIC ORIGINAL PREMISE THEREOF WAS THAT THE PALESTINIANS COULD USE LEBANON AS A BASE FOR COMMANDO RAIDS INTO ISRAEL. IT HAS OF COURSE GONE
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THROUGH TRANSFORMATION, AT LEAST IN LOCAL EYES SINCE
THEN, BUT WE DO NOT KNOW HOW USG REGARDS IT AT THIS
POINT. IT IS LOOMING AS THE NEXT QUESTION ON THE
LOCAL AGENDA, AND WE SHOULD BEGIN TO THINK ABOUT OUR
POSITION WHEN IT COMES UP (IF WE DO NOT ALREADY HAVE
ONE). WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS. PARKER

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